

Amparo Pereanez and Elkin Vanegas have been celebrating Valentine's Day as a married couple for 30 years. Like every married couple, they have hopes and dreams that they share together. For Amparo and Elkin, one of those dreams has been growing a successful business in America. Now in its sixth year of business in East Boston, "Girletata" is their jointly owned apparel boutique that has catered to a Spanish-speaking clientele, but is now reaching an increasingly diverse customer base.

Much has changed in East Boston since they first opened Girletata. "Before, the neighborhood was mostly Spanish speakers," says Amparo. Pointing out the store window, she notes, "Today we have people coming in here who are Chinese, Moroccan, and American. They all live on the blocks around this store."

Determined to attract more customers, Amparo recently completed the first ESOL for Entrepreneurs class in East Boston supported by English for New Bostonians and offered steps away from her store by East Boston Main Streets and East Boston Harborside Community School.

"The classes gave me more confidence to speak to customers about more things money-related, particularly purchases and returns," she says with an assured smile.

It's expensive to operate a business in a city that's rapidly changing, but Amparo and Elkin are fixtures of the neighborhood, and know that increasing their English can help them stay relevant and attuned to customers' needs, no matter where they're from. They're hopeful that as a team, and with the help of their Boston-raised daughters, Girletata can continue to dress the neighborhood.